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## WESTERN RESEARCH INTO THE SOVIET ECONOMY

CPYRGHT

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WHAT we do know is a catalogue, that can however be more or less sensibly drawn up. But the list of what we do not know is incomplete, since it includes what we do not know we do not know. There is of course a catalogue of desiderata, but there are also those data that will simply crop up, and the discoveries we shall owe to some genius whose interests we cannot anticipate. It follows that all delineations of 'the state of the subject' are very ephemeral. Moreover they suffer excruciatingly from the 'honoris causa problem': whom am I not to mention? To the dead the surveyor can only do too little or too much justice. To the living, however, he can give offence, which moreover can be repaid when it comes to reviews, research grants, and openings for promotion.

Sovietological economics is, in this respect, like any other subject. We don't know what will happen next in it; if we did, it would already have happened. But we know its history and some, at least, of the present gaps. We also, of course, know each other. The reader may rest assured that I have already given offence to nearly every one of my colleagues; that by the time this reaches print their reviews of my latest book will be in page-proof; that I've just got my grant, and don't want another. References here to any Sovietologist living or dead are purely coincidental, so to speak. The names that occur are strictly and only those that happen to fit the structure of the article. Those who have not been mentioned are cleverer and wiser and nicer and sillier and stupider and nastier than those who have.

Western economists as an undifferentiated group took an interest in War Communism, and drew from its collapse the expected lesson that a market was indispensable. They saw in the NEP only a return to the market, and paid little attention to the extremely interesting policy discussions of that period. Thus in the early twenties there was no Sovietological economics, and Soviet experience had merely been used to fortify a particular Western prejudice—a prejudice that before linear programming and computers was largely justified.

The first good, specific work by Westerners merely anxious to understand was, naturally, on institutions and policy. One thinks of Maurice

<sup>1</sup> Compare Boris Brutzkus' excellent but narrow-minded book, *Economic Planning in Soviet Russia* (London, 1935), and the use made of it in F. A. von Hayek's very similar work, *Collectivist Economic Planning* (London, 1935).